The Revolution in Guinea-Bissau and the Heritage of Amilcar Cabral

> Between one man carrying a gun and another carrying a tool, the more important of the two is the man with the tool. We've taken up arms to defeat the Portuguese, but the whole point of driving out the Portuguese is to defend the man with the tool.
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> —Amilcar Cabral[1]

Guinea-Bissau, a tiny west African country of less than 1 million people, was at once Portugal's only genuine colony in Africa, and the only one of Portugal's African colonies where settler colonization was not seriously pursued. Unlike Angola and Mozambique, which Portugal had to turn over to the economic penetration of the major imperialist powers to the point where its own economic influence became strictly secondary, Guinea-Bissau remained dominated by Portuguese capital up until its liberation; but also unlike in Angola and Mozambique, Portuguese settler colonization, massive expropriation of the peasants, establishment of large plantations and capitalist mines, etc. was not pursued into the interior of Guinea-Bissau. The traditional social and ethnic structures were thus left intact, with the vast majority of Guineans' only contact with the colonial authority being in the person of the tax collector, the policeman and soldier.

'Horizontal' and 'Vertical' Social Formations of Guinea-Bissau

The agrarian peoples of Guinea-Bissau can be grouped into two main categories: "horizontal" societies containing strong elements of the village community, and hierarchical, feudalistic societies (a distinction we have noted in chs. 1 and 8). The largest of the "horizontal" groups are the Balantes, and the largest of the hierarchical groups the Fulas.

Among the Balantes, each individual village holds property rights to the land, but the products of agriculture and instruments of production belong to the male head of the family. Matriarchy has long ago been overturned, but women participate in food production and enjoy ownership rights to what they produce, providing them a degree of social freedom: Clitoridectomy is not practiced (as it is among the Fulas), polygamy is the exception rather than the rule, and a widow has the right to remarry a man of her choice at the end of a year, rather than automatically becoming the wife of her late husband's brother. There is no accumulation of a social surplus among the Balantes, with surplus wealth being disposed of in great potlatch feasts. Internal monetary exchange scarcely exists. The lineage of civic administration is based on age groups, with the council of elders standing at the head of the village. The religious ideology, merged with civic administration, is animist.

Among the Fulas, whose society is based on a higher technological level including artisanal metalworking, class divisions and class exploitation have emerged. The peasants generally must yield a certain portion of their produce to the village chief and his retainers, so that a social surplus is accumulated and expropriated by a ruling class grouped around the chief. Women, while participating in agricultural labor, are excluded from the skilled artisanal trades, and their labor is considered less worthy than the moneyed dealings of the traders. Women have no economic and social rights, and polygamy is widely practiced and highly respected. The religious ideology is "Islamized"—i.e., adapting Islamic theology to traditional local deities—and a separate caste of priests, retained by the chief, dominates the intellectual life of society.[2]

Amilcar Cabral carefully analyzed the differences between these two types of ethnic/social formations and applied his theoretical understanding to the practice of the national liberation struggle. He noted that the liberation movement found its strongest and most rapid positive response among the Balantes and the other "horizontal" groups, as the democratic goals of the movement largely harmonized with the semicommunal social traditions which these groups had preserved, and councils of village elders often themselves became partisans of the liberation movement. On the other hand, the movement had much greater difficulty winning mass support among the Fulas and the other hierarchical groups, since this required driving a wedge between the peasants and "their" chiefs, who often had become collaborators with Portuguese colonialism and resorted to tribalist ideology to rally "their own" peasants against the "foreign" liberation movement. But it is here that the liberation movement, over the long run, holds its sharpest cutting edge and greatest promise for social transformation, precisely because its democratic program—emancipation of women and democratic land tenure—clashes violently with these exploitative, feudalistic social structures.

Cabral: His Social Origins, His Theoretical Insights

The Cape Verde islands, located several hundred kilometers to the northwest of Guinea-Bissau, were used by the Portuguese colonialists first as a staging area for their slave trade, and later as a convenient point of refueling and resupply for dealings with their African empire. Much intermarriage between Portuguese and Cape Verdians took place, and the Portuguese colonialists used a stratum of educated Cape Verdians, whom they granted special privileges, to run their administration in Guinea-Bissau. The Cape Verdians resident in Guinea-Bissau came to be caught between two conflicting cultures and societies—scorned by the Portuguese for their Africanness, and resented by the Guineans for their Europeanness and privileges. The extreme radical political wing of the Cape Verdians—including Amilcar Cabral, trained as an agronomist in Portugal—joined with radical "native" Guineans of the urban intelligentsia to form the African Party for

the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde islands (PAIGC) in 1956.

In his remarkable 1964 speech at the Frantz Fanon Center in Milan, "Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea-Bissau," Cabral grappled with the theoretical problem of the social and class character of the revolution which PAIGC was leading. He pointed out the material basis for the initial rise of African nationalist consciousness in the urban milieu:

> ...The importance of this urban experience is the fact that it allows comparison: This is the key stimulant required for the awakening of consciousness. It is interesting to note that Algerian nationalism largely sprang up among the *émigré* workers in France. As far as Guinea-Bissau is concerned, the idea of the national liberation struggle was born not abroad but in our own country, in a milieu where people were subjected to close and incessant exploitation. Many people say it is the peasants who carry the burden of exploitation. This may be true, but as far as the struggle is concerned...it is not the degree of suffering and hardship as such that matters; even extreme suffering in itself does not necessarily produce the *prise de conscience* required for the national liberation struggle. In Guinea-Bissau the peasants are subjected to a kind of exploitation equivalent to slavery; but even if you try to explain to them that they are being exploited and robbed, it is difficult to convince them by means of an...explanation of a technico-economic kind that they are the most exploited people; whereas it is easier to convince the workers and the people employed in the town who earn, say 10 escudos a day for a job in which a European earns between 30 and 50 that they are being subjected to massive exploitation and injustice, because they can see. To take my own case as a member of the petty-bourgeois group which launched the struggle in Guinea-Bissau, I was an agronomist working under a European who everybody knew was one of the biggest idiots in Guinea-Bissau. I could have taught him his job with my eyes shut, but he was the boss. This is something which counts a lot...[3]

PAIGC's difficulty in rousing the peasants—who were isolated from direct contact with Portuguese colonial exploitation—for the national liberation struggle, was theoretically generalized by Cabral as the Guinean peasantry's lack of revolutionary capacity:

> ...I should like to broach one key problem, which is of enormous importance for us, as we are a country of peasants, and that is the problem of whether or not the peasantry represents the main revolutionary force. I shall confine myself to my own country, Guinea, where it must be said at once that the peasantry is not a revolutionary force—which may seem strange, particularly as we have based the whole of our armed struggle for liberation on the peasantry. A distinction must be drawn between a physical force and a revolutionary force; *physically,* the peasantry is a great force in Guinea: It is almost the whole of the population,... it is the peasantry which produces; but we know from experience what trouble we had convincing the peasantry to fight... The conditions of the peasantry in China were very different: The peasantry had a history of revolt, but this was not the case in Guinea, and so it was not possible for our party militants to find the same kind of welcome among the peasantry in Guinea for the idea of national liberation as the idea found in China...[4]

More accurate would be to say that the Guinean peasantry is not an *independent* revolutionary force; scattered about, not engaged in highly *socialized* production and heavily tied to pre-commodity social structures, the peasantry, by itself, is incapable of overthrowing the existing, exploitative social regime and establishing a new, historically progressive social regime. Yet the peasantry, under the leadership of PAIGC, did play a revolutionary role in overthrowing colonial capitalist rule. Even the enormous Chinese peasantry, despite its centuries old tradition of revolt, could not make a social revolution by itself; in the centuries prior to the introduction of modern capitalist industry, the Chinese peasantry would periodically rise up against a reactionary central dynasty and overthrow it, only to catapult a new, exploitative dynasty into power. It was only with the rise of the modern proletariat that the Chinese peasantry was able to win its emancipation, by forging a revolutionary alliance with the proletariat in the national liberation struggle. In China, this revolutionary worker-peasant alliance took the form of the proletarian People's Liberation Army (see ch. 10); in Guinea-Bissau, it took the form of the PAIGC army.

Cabral went on to describe the early probings of the PAIGC founding group for an active mass base of support for the independence struggle:

> ...When we had made our analysis, there were still many theoretical and practical problems left in front of us. We had some knowledge of other experiences and we knew that a struggle of the kind we hoped to lead—and win—had to be led by the working class. We looked for the working class in Guinea-Bissau and did not find it... We decided to extend our activity to the workers in the towns, and we had some success with this; we launched moves for higher wages, better working conditions, etc... [But] obviously we did not have a proletariat. We quite clearly lacked revolutionary intellectuals [as a coherent social stratum], so we had to start searching, given that we—rightly—did not believe in the revolutionary capacity of the peasantry.[5]

By "not having a proletariat," Cabral clearly means not having a large and concentrated industrial proletariat. But the same can be said of China following Japanese imperialism's deindustrialization of China's coastal cities during the 1930's—or, for that matter, of Mozambique. Cabral continues:

> One important group in the towns were the people working in the boats carrying merchandise, who mostly live in Bissau [the island capital city] itself and travel up and down the rivers. These people proved highly conscious of their position and of their economic importance, and they took the initiative of launching strikes without any labor union leadership at all. We therefore decided to concentrate all our work on this group. This gave excellent results, and this group soon came to form a kind of nucleus which influenced the attitudes of other wage earning groups in the towns—workers proper and drivers... We thus found our little proletariat.[6]
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> ...We are not a Communist party or a Marxist-Leninist party, but the people now leading the peasants in the struggle in Guinea-Bissau are mostly from the urban milieux and connected with the urban wage earning group.[7]*

*"Dock and other transport workers comprise the most conscious element... Wage laborers on the whole were prompt to join the struggle... They often retain a peasant mentality [since] in tropical Africa the city-country migration still moves in both directions... The mechanics, accustomed to precise and painstaking work, have an excellent sense of organization and discipline. Very

However, Cabral, proceeding from the small and embryonic character of the Guinean proletariat, stops short of defining the proletariat as the leading class force of the anticolonial revolution:

> Our problem is to see who is capable of *taking control of the state apparatus* [emphasis added] when the colonial power is destroyed. In Guinea-Bissau the peasants cannot read or write, they have had almost no relations with the colonial forces during the colonial period except for paying taxes, which is done indirectly. The working class hardly exists as a defined class; it is just an embryo. There is no *economically viable* bourgeoisie, because imperialism prevented it from being created. What there is, is a stratum of people in the service of imperialism who have learned how to manipulate the apparatus of the state—the African petty bourgeoisie. This is the only stratum capable of controlling or even utilizing the instruments which the colonial state used against our people. So we come to the conclusion that in colonial conditions it is the petty bourgeoisie which is the *inheritor* [emphasis added] of state power (though I wish I could be wrong)...[9]

Given that Cabral is talking about "*inheriting,*" "*taking control of*" the state apparatus established by colonialism, his conception is correct: In such a situation, state power inevitably passes into the hands of the African petty bourgeoisie, i.e., the nascent national bourgeoisie. "The working class cannot seize hold of the readymade capitalist state apparatus and wield it for its own purposes." (Marx). Fortunately, however, the *inheriting* of the colonial state apparatus—and here again, we are not talking about the outward, bureaucratic features of the colonial state such as the tax, foreign trade and public works ministries, but rather about the heart and soul of the colonial state: the army and police—is by no means the inevitable outcome of the independence struggle, as the revolutions in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau itself have shown. In Guinea-Bissau, as in Angola and Mozambique, the achievement of independence did not mark the inheritance of the colonial state apparatus by the national liberation front. Rather,

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often they have made remarkable cadres of middle rank at the heart of the guerrilla struggle."[8]

the colonial army and police were smashed through the national liberation war, and replaced by a new army based on the Guinean workers and peasants. In this sense, Cabral's theoretical defeatism was overturned by his practical revolutionism.

Cabral considers the alternative of whether a revolutionary or nonrevolutionary state emerges following independence, to hinge primarily on the subjective decision of the petty bourgeoisie which has taken power:

> ...The petty bourgeoisie can either ally itself with imperialism and the reactionary strata in its own country to try and preserve itself as a petty bourgeoisie, or ally itself with the workers and peasants, who must themselves take power or control power to make the revolution...[10]
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> ...[Still in all,] the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie is honest; i.e., in spite of all the hostile conditions, it remains identified with the fundamental interests of the popular masses. To do this it may have to commit suicide, but it will not lose; by sacrificing itself it can reincarnate itself, but in the condition of workers or peasants. In speaking of honesty I am not trying to establish moral criteria for judging the role of the petty bourgeoisie when it is in power; what I mean by honesty, in a political context, is total commitment and total identification with the toiling masses.[11]

Nonetheless, Cabral has here fallen into a subjectivist line of analysis. Nkrumah (Ghana) and Allende (Chile) were no doubt "honest" representatives of the radical petty bourgeoisie who sincerely attempted to serve the interests of the toiling masses. But their governments both rested on capitalist state apparatuses, and their regimes both served, in the last analysis, the interests of capitalist exploitation of the working masses. They objectively helped soften the working masses up for the military slaughter, and were inevitably overthrown by the very capitalist military apparatus upon which their regimes had rested. And other radical bourgeois African regimes, such as those of Nyerere (Tanzania) and Sékou Touré (Guinea-Conakry — see ch. 9), whose leaders have attempted to "commit class suicide" and merge into the working masses by struggling against the rising bureaucratic bourgeoisie, have struggled to no avail, precisely because they inherited rather than destroyed the colonial, capitalist state apparatus.

Cabral speculates:

> To return to the question of the nature of the petty bourgeoisie and the role it can play after the liberation, I should like to put a question to you. What would you have thought if Fidel Castro had come to terms with the Americans? Is this possible or not? Is it possible or impossible that the Cuban petty bourgeoisie, which set the Cuban people marching towards revolution, might have come to terms with the Americans?[12]

Yes, it is possible that Castro could have come to terms with U.S. imperialism after the Jan. 1959 conquest of power by his 26 July Movement. But he could not have restored capitalist class rule in Cuba, except through leading a counterrevolutionary civil war that would smash the new, workers' state created in 1959 (see ch. 10). As a point in fact, an entire, conservative faction of the 26 July Movement leadership, representing the aspiring national bourgeoisie, *did* come to terms with U.S. imperialism and attempt to launch a counterrevolutionary overthrow of the new workers' state, climaxing in the Bay of Pigs invasion. Castro sided with the workers' state (although the side which he took as an individual was not the decisive factor), and the Cuban working masses crushed the counterrevolution. Cuba thus remained a workers' state.

The degree to which the professional administrators of such a workers' state, who are heavily drawn from the upper petty bourgeoisie, "commit class suicide" and merge with the working masses, is an independent question. Such administrative recruits from the petty bourgeoisie must, at any rate, be considered administrative agents of the proletariat in power; the more stubbornly they entrench themselves as a parasitic, privileged bureaucracy and thus *refuse* to "commit class suicide," the more necessary it becomes for the workers to *force* them to "commit class suicide" by purging them from the summits of the workers' state in a supplementary revolution.

Early Pitfalls and Strengths of the PAIGC

In 1959, dockworkers at Pijiguiti went on strike. Colonial police shot 50 strikers dead, breaking the strike. Over 100 wounded strikers were taken to a hospital, but disappeared

during the night. This defeat caused PAIGC to re-evaluate its urban based political strategy and formulate a plan for a protracted, rural based war of independence.

Unlike Frelimo in Mozambique (see ch. 11), PAIGC did not plunge precipitously into armed struggle before mass political preparation. It spent three years conducting patient political education and pre-mobilization work in several parts of the country, while Cabral was training 1,000 cadres in the PAIGC cadre school in Conakry, struggling to inculcate them with a workingclass consciousness,* in preparation for launching the armed struggle. When PAIGC launched its first armed offensive against the Portuguese positions in 1963, it thus met with powerful mass enthusiasm from the start and succeeded in liberating a large portion of the country in a short time.

However, the regionally autonomous structure of the PAIGC military organization soon degenerated into local autocracy, with many local PAIGC commanders coming to play an exploitative role towards the peasants in "their" liberated zones, resorting to tribalist favoritism in a drive to consolidate local despotisms—in a fashion similar to the FLN *wilaya* commanders in the Algerian war of independence (see ch. 4). The democratic social program of PAIGC was thereby scrapped in favor of reliance on religious superstitions and oppressive social practices. Francisco Mendes (Chico Te), a PAIGC leader, related several years later that these local commanders

> 'began to seek advice in old customs and beliefs about witchcraft, invoking the spirits of their ancestors or...of the forest...with the help of charms and ceremonies, asking their diviners to find out if their actions could be successful. They became the victims of these beliefs. They made others the victims of them, too.' Just as in the Congo [1964], the belief in bullet-immunizing charms became common, and...'the belief that death or wounding in battle was brought to this or that

*Cabral related: "...We prepared a number of cadres from the group [of preclassed, semi-intellectual urban youth], some from the people employed in commerce and other wage earners, and even some peasants, so that they could acquire what you might call a workingclass mentality... When these cadres returned to the rural areas they inculcated a certain mentality into the peasants, and it is among these cadres that we have chosen the people who are now leading the struggle...[13]

militant by witchcraft. So that when the Portuguese attacked or bombed their bases, they rejected efficacious methods of self-defense...and said instead that witches had eaten their men. There began a hunt for "witches," and some of those accused of witchcraft were shot and others were even burned alive.'[14]

Ironically, such antiwoman atrocities were most widespread in the Balante populated liberated zones; they were often perpetrated by local village militants acting without PAIGC authorization. The oppressive character of these local regimes, and their incompetence in the face of the Portuguese aerial bombardments, led to a growing mass exodus from the liberated zones, bringing the PAIGC to the brink of ruin.

Cabral Leads Rectification Conference

In February 1964, Cabral organized a PAIGC rectification conference inside Guinea-Bissau, to which the local commanders arrived with their respective armed coteries. After a tense political struggle and thorough criticism of the tribalist degeneration of the local commanders, Cabral and his colleagues gained the upper hand, and arrested those commanders guilty of oppressive atrocities. He then deployed them to different zones for reintegration into the movement; two of the guilty commanders, who were in open revolt against the PAIGC leadership and had refused to attend the conference, were arrested and executed. PAIGC proceeded to form the core of a regular army, with a centralized command structure and whose troops and officers were deployed on an all-national, and not a regional basis. Starting with 900 volunteers, the liberation army suffered an initial desertion rate of 30-40%.[15] But the proletarian elements of PAIGC had triumphed over the aspiring bourgeois elements, and the movement from that point on was thus able to remain true to its democratic program and regain, deepen and activate its mass support.

The fact that this objective, proletarian class clarification in the liberation front took place several years before a parallel clarification occurred within Frelimo (Mozambique) and MPLA (Angola), led to PAIGC being the most politically, and therefore the most militarily effective of the three sister libera-

tion fronts—tying down by far the greatest number of Portuguese troops (in proportion to the population of its country). The Portuguese troop deployment in Guinea-Bissau swelled from 10,000 at the start of the war to 85,000 by the 1970's: one Portuguese troop against every ten Guineans.

Cabral's Revolutionary Democratic Practice

An example of Cabral's moral authority in struggling to implement the PAIGC program can be seen in a speech he gave to some 300 assembled villagers of the Mandingo ethnic group, an "Islamized" people with a social structure similar to that of the Fulas:

> ...We have got to open still more schools. But the schools are worthless if they change nothing. Why should a little girl go to school if afterwards she must be married by force? I'm telling you that the Party is not going to tolerate any more of these transactions and business deals involving daughters. Soon we intend to remove the children from the base camp and place them back in their home villages. But they are not to be married off against their will. Some of the girls came to us at the base...in order to avoid being married against their will. A woman should marry the man she has chosen and not the one her parents have chosen for her.
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> The women here have been doing what they could in production, and they deserve our respect for that. Meanwhile, a good many of the men have been content to go on trafficking. There are some who prefer trading in Gambia... They buy and they sell, they sell and they buy, and finally they buy themselves a woman in order to put her to work. Now all that has got to stop. The land is good, there is no lack of rain. You have just got to get down to work. Every single man has got to work; the building of our country is not going to come from heaven. Everybody has got to work. The war is no excuse...[16]

Elected village committees, consisting of five people, were required to include at least two women. In 1972, elections by secret ballot to a people's national assembly were held throughout the liberated zones—demonstrating to the world that the emerging PAIGC regime was far more democratic than was military-ruled Portugal (and, for that matter,

western Europe and North America, where elections are controlled by the billionaire corporations).

Cabral is Assassinated

On 20 January 1973, Amilcar Cabral was assassinated in Conakry by agents of Portuguese colonialism who had infiltrated his organization. Apparently, anti-Cape Verdian animosity and anti-*mestiço* racialism had been used by general Spinola's counterinsurgency experts as a lever to organize the assassination. Portuguese colonialism had killed Africa's greatest revolutionary leader. But it could not destroy the Guinean revolution which he had played such a critical role in spawning. A renewed military offensive by PAIGC brought the vast bulk of the rural territory under PAIGC control, and before the end of the year PAIGC formally declared the republic of Guinea-Bissau. The colonial regime remained entrenched largely in the island capital city of Bissau, around which it built an impregnable, heavily militarized barrier consisting of two full rings of barbed wire fence.

Guinea-Bissau is Liberated

That barrier was shattered by the April 1974 antifascist coup in Portugal and the subsequent unleashing of the Portuguese workers. By September, the Portuguese military presence had been cleared from Guinea-Bissau, and PAIGC assumed power throughout the country. Guinea-Bissau thus became the first workers' state in Africa.

Agrarian Policy

The land, while formally nationalized, could not quickly be brought under socialized production, due to the extremely weak economic base of the new state, which scarcely possessed a productive industry. On the other hand, since colonialism had not undertaken massive expropriation of peasant land and since traditional democratic forms of land tenure were widespread, radical land reform was generally not required. Most of the early experiments in state farms proved unviable, and the state came to limit its agrarian role largely to supplying

smallholding peasants with seed, fertilizer and insecticide at relatively low prices, or in exchange for an equivalent amount of seed from the peasants at the end of the harvest cycle.[17] In a 1979 land law, the size of family plots was fixed at a minimum of 10 hectares and a maximum of 20. Legally held land can be passed down from parents to children, with ultimate ownership residing with the state.[18] Such a land policy contains the danger of cultivating a rising layer of rich peasants who will exert themselves to stifle socialization. However, at the same time, PAIGC has been organizing agrarian cooperatives on a voluntary basis (similar to the communal villages in Mozambique), and this movement has been making slow progress.

In May 1980, the people's national assembly passed a land reform law abolishing the sale or rental of rice fields in the northern region of Cacheu, "thus striking a serious blow against the local Mandjak aristocracy, who considered themselves the rightful owners of this land. The Mandjak chiefs are now only entitled to the land which they and their families can farm directly. Those currently working the fields—regardless of whether they bought or rented them—are confirmed in possession, and any obligations they may have in respect to the former landowners are wiped out. Each peasant must make use of all the land in his possession. Any abandoned land will automatically revert to the state."[19]

In the years following independence, Guinea-Bissau was victimized by the intense Sahelian drought sweeping west Africa, and its agricultural production initially took a sharp plunge. The PAIGC regime launched a campaign to convince peasants in the affected regions to abandon their traditional slash-and-burn, extensive form of agriculture, a method effective enough for subsistence economy during normal times, but which was now contributing to the encroaching desertification. The Cape Verde islands, suffering several successive years of drought, were ruined economically, forcing the vast majority of their inhabitants to emigrate to Europe and North America in search of a livelihood. The new state piled up a seriously mounting balance of trade (and payments) deficit, forcing it to increase the basic tax rate levied against the lowest income people by 50% in 1979. The tax increase was also needed to finance a

planned agro-industrial project which holds the potential for a breakthrough in agricultural productivity.[20]

Bureaucratic Deformation

The material conditions militating towards bureaucratic deformation of the new workers' states in Angola and Mozambique—a weak industry and tiny industrial proletariat, an unbalanced agriculture, an economy shattered by war and natural disasters, and isolation in a neocolonialized Africa—are multiplied ten times over in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde islands. Luis Cabral, president of Guinea-Bissau, noted the degree of bureaucratic calcification in a 1979 speech before the people's national assembly:

> Our committees at sector, section and village level have to participate more actively in the effort to develop our country... There are people holding responsible positions in the sectors whose work is little more than that undertaken by colonial administrators in the past. That is, they try to gather in the taxes, they indicate the presence of the State in the area, but they have no effective and direct participation in the development effort.[21]

This bureaucratization of local administration has in turn led to a bureaucratic, topdown approach to the struggle against backward traditional social practices. The same session of the people's national assembly passed a law on witchcraft allowing for the death penalty against a person convicted of inciting the lynching or serious injury of another through charges of witchcraft. This law, which has the effect of protecting women against personally vindictive, "traditional" terror, was widely approved in the assembly. Far more controversial, however, was a second law imposing heavy prison sentences—two to eight years for first-time offenders—upon those convicted of cattle thievery, and allowing for the death penalty against those judged incorrigible thieves.

> There was considerable unease about this, and about the discrepancy between the death penalty for cattle rustling, and prison terms for corrupt state functionaries. In the view of Victor Monteiro, governor of the National Bank, those who dipped their hands into the state coffers were much more consciously criminal than cattle thieves. They were educated

people and fully aware of the gravity of their offense—and their punishment should be correspondingly greater. Furthermore, Monteiro pointed out, among the Balante, Guinea-Bissau's largest ethnic group, it has long been traditional for young men to demonstrate their courage by going on cattle stealing expeditions...[22]

Luis Cabral, however, threw his weight behind this proposed law, arguing that cattle thieving expeditions endanger the lives of innocent peasants, while stealing from the public treasury does not (the latter only takes food out of the mouths of the peasants and deprives them of seed, fertilizer, and farm implements). The preliminary form of the law, smacking heavily of the social hypocrisy and narrowminded empiricism of bourgeois jurisprudence, was passed.

Unprincipled Coup D'Etat

On 10 November 1980, a new state constitution was adopted establishing a presidential regime, increasing the power of Luis Cabral and threatening to strip his principal commissar and president of the people's national assembly, comandante Joao Bernardo Vieira, of most of his powers. Four days later, Vieira, a popular PAIGC guerrilla leader and minister of the armed forces since independence, overthrew Cabral in a military putsch. Two PAIGC leaders and two soldiers were killed in the takeover, and most of the party and security leaders arrested. The putsch, apparently channeling anti-Cape Verdian and anti-*mestiço* sentiments against Cabral and his closest associates, was greeted with mass enthusiasm in Bissau.[23]

Lacking a coherent political critique of the Luis Cabral regime, Vieira at first promised that there would be no reprisals against the arrested Cabral, but later prepared to try Cabral on charges of "abuse of power," claiming that Cabral had authorized the secret execution of over 400 renegade PAIGC members after independence. (Luis Cabral has since been exiled to Cuba).

The first country to recognize the Vieira regime was Guinea-Conakry. Sékou Touré, after having provided his country as a

rear base area for PAIGC during its independence war, had chilled to the Luis Cabral regime after independence, unhappy over Cabral's granting political asylum to opponents of his own regime and contending with Guinea-Bissau over reputedly rich offshore oil reserves. Having pushed "pure black" racialism in promoting the putsch, Sékou Touré now publicly called for a state merger between Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry, in explicit opposition to the merger between Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde islands.[24]

Aristides Pereira, president of Cape Verde islands and formal head of PAIGC, denounced the Vieira putsch as "contrary to the methods of PAIGC."[25] "Nothing can justify the replacement of the party's bodies by a revolutionary council completely alien to the party and ideologically undefined."[26] There has been a *de facto* rupture between Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde islands, with PAIGC splintering into its two territorial components.

"Every Communist must grasp the truth, 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun,'" wrote Mao during China's national war against Japanese imperialism. "Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party."[27] With the victorious Vieira putsch, the gun has come to command the PAIGC. The social regime of proletarian rule has not been overthrown, but a dangerous method of resolving political disputes has been set in motion, which will lead, at the least, to a further entrenchment of arbitrary bureaucracy.

Amilcar Cabral would have been the first to denounce and struggle against such a regressive development. But even he could not have defeated it by struggling within the tiny and impoverished context of Guinea-Bissau alone. His greatness was his careful and rigorous attention to the concrete conditions of his national arena of struggle, his political honesty, courage and consistency; his weakness was his unwarranted modesty* and his tendency towards theoretical empiricism.

*E.g., while noting in discussions with his comrades that Nkrumah's political policy while in power largely contributed to his own downfall,[28] Cabral never formulated his critique of Nkrumah in writing as a tool for African and world revolutionaries.

What Africa desperately needs is an organized legion of Amilcar Cabrals, men and women, who have the audacity to give their revolutionary practice and theory a world historic scope.

Ch. 12: The Revolution in Guinea-Bissau and the Heritage of Amilcar Cabral

1. Gérard Chaliand, *Armed Struggle in Africa: With the Guerrillas in 'Portuguese' Guinea*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969, p. 35.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-17, and Amilcar Cabral, "Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea-Bissau," *Guinea-Bissau: Toward Final Victory! Selected Speeches and Documents from PAIGC*, Richmond, Canada: LSM Information Service, 1974, pp. 15-16.
3. Cabral, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-2.
4. *Ibid.*, Cambridge, Mass.: Africa Research Group, pp. 434-5. The LSM press translation reads: "...The peasantry is not a *spontaneously* revolutionary force." (p. 19, emphasis added). But in view of the logic of Cabral's further remarks on the subject, it appears that the word "spontaneously" was added extraneously in translation.
5. *Ibid.*, LSM Press, pp. 23-4.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
8. Chaliand, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
9. Cabral, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
10. *Ibid.*, Africa Research Group, p. 441.
11. *Ibid.*, LSM Press, p. 28.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5.
14. Basil Davidson, *Let Freedom Come: Africa in Modern History*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1978, pp. 348-9.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Chaliand, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-7.
17. *People's Power in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau*, no. 14, summer 1979, pp. 41-2.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
19. *Ibid.*, no. 16, summer 1980, p. 5.
20. *Ibid.*, no. 14, summer 1979, pp. 43-4.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-6.
23. *Le Monde*, 18 November 1980, p. 1.
24. *Guardian* (New York), 26 November 1980, p. 24.
25. *Le Monde, op. cit.*
26. *People's Power in Mozambique,...*, no. 17, spring 1981, p. 19.
27. Mao Zedong, "Problems of War and Strategy," *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. 2, Beijing (Peking): Foreign Languages Press, 1975, p. 224.
28. Chaliand, *op. cit.*, p. 42.